

Media Release Embargoed until April 28, 2008 – 5:00am EST

Future Canadian Physicians will Bring Changes to Health Care

Today's health systems must plan for the expectations of tomorrow's physicians

(April 28, 2008, Ottawa, ON) – Data released today from the medical student and resident component of the 2007 National Physician Survey (NPS) highlight the need for governments, medical schools and professional medical organizations to pay attention to the changing face of the medical profession. Medical students and residents have identified several priorities that signify changes from the way previous generations of physicians worked: a better balance between professional and personal aspects of life; the opportunity to work collaboratively with other health professionals; and the intention to use more technology in practice.

Sixty percent of students and 52% of residents identified balance between work and personal life as the most important factor in determining a satisfying and successful medical practice. “This priority that has been clearly identified among medical students and residents will be important for health human resource planners to take into consideration for the future,” says Dr. Ruth Wilson, President of The College of Family Physicians of Canada.

Although future physicians may work fewer hours, their interest in using technology more effectively should enhance delivery of care. Currently about a quarter of practicing physicians in Canada use electronic medical records (EMRs). The NPS results reflect that 75% of second year residents expect to use EMRs in practice.

“The survey results reconfirmed that the current physician shortage affects timely access to care for patients,” states Canadian Medical Association President, Dr. Brian Day. “Wait times will be further influenced by changing patterns of physician practice. While future physicians are part of the solution, the way they want to practice and their priorities must be considered in ongoing efforts to improve timely access.”

How future physicians want to practice will impact how health care is delivered. Thirty-three percent of family medicine residents indicated their intention to pursue a special interest within family medicine (e.g. emergency medicine, obstetrics, palliative care and sports medicine). A significant proportion of residents in specialties other than family medicine are also choosing to sub-specialize in more focused areas (e.g. choosing pediatric cardiology within cardiology or hematology within internal medicine).

The survey confirmed that debt can affect choice of specialty, either leading trainees to select a specialty they believe will have a higher earning potential, or selecting a specialty they know has a shorter residency program so they can pay down their debts more quickly. Thirty-six percent of medical students who responded to the survey expect their debt load directly related to attending medical school to be in excess of \$80K. Students and residents also confirmed that their choice of practice location could be determined by a financial incentive.

Notwithstanding their significant debt load, medical students and residents indicate that they are drawn to careers in medicine for a variety of reasons:

- The top three reasons among medical students: intellectual stimulation / challenge (93%), professional relationships in caring for patients (83%), earning potential (42%).
- The top three reasons among 2nd year family medicine residents: professional relationships in caring for patients (85%), workload flexibility and / or predictability (79%), intellectual stimulation / challenge (65%).

.../2

- The top three reasons among 2nd year other specialty residents: intellectual stimulation / challenge (88%), professional relationships in caring for patients (54%), workload flexibility and / or predictability (50%).
- Sixty-four percent of medical students, 74% of family medicine residents and 41% of other residents intend to practice in the province where they are currently training.

“Medical students and residents prepare diligently for their careers,” states Dr. Louise Samson, President of The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. “The NPS reflects some significant changes on the horizon; however we see that the professional values of medical students and residents will produce the kinds of physicians who can respond to the needs of Canadians. The nation can be assured that students and residents are being well educated in order to provide competent care when they become practicing physicians.”

The NPS is Canada’s largest census survey of physicians and physicians-in-training. It is conducted jointly by The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC). Earlier this year the survey results for practicing physicians were released nationally and regionally.

For a more detailed summary highlighting the 2007 student and resident results, and tabular results for all survey questions, please go to www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca.

In the near future, the final official release of 2007 NPS results will be released according to individual specialties.

The NPS has been made possible through the financial contributions of the Canadian Medical Association, The College of Family Physicians of Canada, The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, and Health Canada.

- 30 -

To request interviews, please contact:

(Aussi disponible en français)

Cristiane Doherty

Delta Media

1-888-473-3582

Cell (613) 799-9277

cristiane@deltamedia.ca

Bernard Gauthier

Delta Media

1-888-473-3582

bernard@deltamedia.ca

Jayne Johnston

The College of Family Physicians of Canada

1-800-387-6197 ext. 303/ (905) 629-0900 ext. 303

jjohnston@cfpc.ca

Cecily Wallace

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

1-800-668-3740 ext. 180 / (613) 260-4180 ext. 180 / Cell (613) 286-7328

cwallace@rcpsc.edu

Lucie Boileau

Canadian Medical Association

1-800-663-7336 ext. 1266 / (613) 731-8610 ext. 1266

Lucie.Boileau@cma.ca